

NSC BRIEFING

5 October 1960

LAOS

- I. Premier Souvanna Phouma appears to be rapidly gaining the upper hand in his struggle with General Phoumi's Savannakhet Revolutionary Committee.
- A. His order dismissing Phoumi and 26 other officers from the army, his announced refusal to negotiate with Phoumi and his insistence that Phoumi pledge his loyalty to the legal government all reflect Souvanna's confidence that he can avoid a compromise which might lead to replacement of his government.
- B. In the policy field, Souvanna is moving quickly to implement his program of neutralism and peace with the Pathet Lao.
1. King Savang has approved conduct of relations with USSR, accrediting Soviet ambassadors resident in either Cambodia or Thailand.
2. Negotiations with Souvanna's half-brother, Pathet leader Prince Souphannouvong, will probably start within a few days.
- II. Souvanna has had little success in his efforts to bring Captain Kong Le under control. Kong Le acts as if he were running the show.
- A. Kong Le is useful to Souvanna in mobilizing popular support for his regime and, through his paratroopers, in inflicting humiliating military reverses on Phoumi.
- B. On the other hand, Kong Le's power to take independent action must be a source of concern to Souvanna, and may impel him to go farther in the direction of conciliation of the Communists, both at home and abroad.

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- III. Phoumi, meanwhile, appears to be nearing the end of his rope. Barring quick injection of outside assistance, he may soon be faced with the choice of either limping back to Vientiane or fleeing the country.
- IV. King Savang is apparently hopeful that a new government of national unity, with someone other than Souvanna at the helm can be put together, but time is beginning to run out.
- A. He may soon have little choice but to permit Souvanna to continue in office.
- B. A report that Souvanna plans to organize a demonstration in his own behalf in Luang Prabang on the day he comes to see the King provides interesting insight into Souvanna's methods and intentions. Such a demonstration would be calculated to dissuade the King, a reluctant politician at best, from asking for Souvanna's resignation.